

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for supporting printer maintenance in a network environment having a server, at least one network device and a printer, the server containing a plurality of printer configuration files, said method comprising the steps of:

10 accessing one of the printer configuration files which corresponds to the printer, the configuration file including a plurality of printer maintenance function names and a plurality of printer maintenance commands corresponding to the printer maintenance function names;

15 generating an HTML-based page corresponding to the printer, the HTML-based page containing each of the printer maintenance function names from the accessed printer configuration file; and

20 sending the HTML-based page to the network device,

25 wherein, upon selection in the network device of one of the printer maintenance function names in the HTML-based page, the server sends to the printer the printer maintenance command which corresponds to the selected printer maintenance function name.

30 2. A method according to Claim 1, further including the step of receiving a printer maintenance request from the network device, the printer maintenance request containing a reference to the printer.

35 3. A method according to Claim 2, wherein the accessing step is performed in response to receipt of the printer maintenance request.

4. A method according to Claim 1, wherein each of the printer configuration files has a standardized data format.

5 5. A method according to Claim 4, wherein the standardized data format is an industry standard format.

10 6. A method according to Claim 4, wherein the standardized data format includes an industry standard format and an extension to the industry standard format.

15 7. A method according to Claim 1, wherein each of the printer configuration files includes a plurality of printer maintenance function data sets, wherein each printer maintenance function data set includes a printer maintenance function name, a printer maintenance function description, a printer maintenance function resource and a printer maintenance function command parameter.

20 25 8. A method according to Claim 7, wherein the printer maintenance function resource is a file containing image data for incorporation into the HTML-based page.

30 9. A method according to Claim 8, wherein the image data in the file represents the printer maintenance function name corresponding to the printer maintenance function resource.

35 10. A method according to Claim 7, wherein the printer maintenance function command parameter is a printer maintenance function command which is identified by the printer maintenance function name

corresponding to the printer maintenance function command parameter.

5 11. A method according to Claim 7, wherein
the printer maintenance function command parameter
represents a command file containing a printer
maintenance function command which is identified by
the printer maintenance function name corresponding
to the printer maintenance function command
parameter.

10 12. A method according to Claim 7, further
including a command parameter indicator which, when
set to a first value, indicates that the printer
maintenance function command parameter is a printer
maintenance function command and, when set to a
second value, indicates that the printer maintenance
function command parameter represents a command file
containing a printer maintenance function command.

15 13. A method according to Claim 1, wherein
the interface module is a standardized software
module for building an HTML-based page.

20 14. A method according to Claim 13,
wherein the interface module is provided by the
operating system of the server.

25 15. A method according to Claim 1, wherein
the interface module is a common gateway interface
module.

30 16. A method according to Claim 1, wherein
the selection by the network device of one of the
printer maintenance function names is performed by a
user of the network device.

17. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the user of the network device selects one of the printer maintenance function names by using a pointing device connected to the network device.

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18. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the method is performed in the server.

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19. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the network environment is a digital cable network.

20. A method according to Claim 19, wherein the network device is a set top box.

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21. A method according to Claim 19, wherein the method is performed in the server which is located in a cable head end of the digital cable network.

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22. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the server executes a script to send the printer maintenance command to the printer.

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23. A method according to Claim 22, wherein the script is a common gateway interface script.

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24. A method for supporting printer maintenance in a network environment having a server, a plurality of network devices, and a printer connected to one of the plurality of network devices, the server containing a plurality of printer configuration files, said method comprising the steps of:

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receiving a printer maintenance request from one of the network devices, the printer

2010 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

maintenance request containing a reference to the printer;

5 accessing one of the printer configuration files which corresponds to the printer, the printer configuration files having a standardized data format and including a plurality of printer maintenance function data sets each of which includes a printer maintenance function name, a printer maintenance function description, a printer maintenance function resource and a printer maintenance function command parameter;

10 generating, by use of an interface module in the server, an HTML-based page corresponding to the printer, the HTML-based page containing for each printer maintenance function data set the corresponding printer maintenance function name, the printer maintenance function description, and the printer maintenance function resource; and

15 sending the HTML-based page to the network device that sent the printer maintenance request,

20 wherein, upon selection by the network device of one of the printer maintenance function names in the HTML-based page, the server sends to the printer a printer maintenance function command which is derived from the printer maintenance function command parameter corresponding to the selected printer maintenance function name.

25 25. A network server for supporting printer maintenance in a network environment having at least one network device and a printer, the server containing a plurality of printer configuration files, comprising:

30 a program memory for storing process steps executable to perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 24; and

a processor for executing the process steps stored in said program memory.

26. Computer-executable process steps
5 stored on a computer readable medium, said computer-
executable process steps to support printer
maintenance in a network environment having a
server, at least one network device and a printer,
the server containing a plurality of printer
10 configuration files, said computer-executable
process steps comprising process steps executable to
perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 24.

27. A computer-readable medium which
15 stores computer-executable process steps, the
computer-executable process steps to support printer
maintenance in a network environment having a
server, at least one network device and a printer,
the server containing a plurality of printer
20 configuration files, said computer-executable
process steps comprising process steps executable to
perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 24.